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What Are You Going To Feed Your Cows This Winter?

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The dry summer has created some real dairy feeding and management problems in Minnesota this fall. Conditions differ widely. Some farmers have plenty of feed; some have enough roughage but are short of grain, and some are short of both roughage and grain.

You men of the first group are fortunate. You have the same old problem of culling the poor cows and putting their feed into the good cows, as they need it. Good cows are paying a bigger premium for feed than they did a year ago.

You of the second group, who have roughage but are short of grain, will find it will pay to buy grain for your good cows at present prices. With grain at \$15 to \$18 a ton, the extra pounds of butterfat produced from the grain will cost only 6 cents to 7 cents a pound for feed. If you are in a grain-short community, you may find that wheat bran and middlings are a cheap feed this year. Unless you have a legume hay, you must add some high protein feed to the grain mixture. Buy the one that is the lowest in price at your market.

Serious Problem

You who are short of roughage as well as grain face a more serious problem. Shipped-in hay is always an expensive feed, but if hay can be obtained from neighbors you can be graduated into the second class.

At any rate, try to fit the herd to the roughage supply. Get rid, first of all, of the poor cows.

Save the best roughage for the milking cows. Any kind of roughage that will furnish bulk with a little grain will carry the others through the winter. Do not put \$30 worth of feed into a cow that will be worth only \$30 in the spring, with no return through the winter to pay for the feed.

Grain is cheaper per ton than shipped-in hay. It is worth more as a feed. So buy grain and make any kind of roughage do. Straw and five pounds of oats a day will make a fairly good roughage.

A good cow with 30-cent fat will return a bigger margin on the feed this year than last.

Sample Rations

Pick out the one that meets your conditions. When the roughage consists of alfalfa, clover or sweet clover hay, with or without silage, use the following mixtures:

(1)		
Ground oats	.....	200
" barley	.....	100
" corn	.....	100

(3)		
Ground oats	.....	200
Wheat middlings	.....	200
" bran	.....	100

(5)		
Ground oats	.....	200
" barley	.....	100
Gluten feed	.....	100

(2)		
Ground barley	.....	200
" oats	.....	100
" wheat bran	.....	100

(4)		
Ground oats	.....	400
" barley	.....	300
" rye	.....	100

(6)		
Ground oats	.....	200
" barley	.....	100
" wheat	.....	100

When only half of the hay is legume, with or without silage, use the following mixtures:

(1)		
Ground oats	.....	300
" barley	.....	100
" rye	.....	100
Linseed meal	.....	100

(3)		
Ground oats	.....	100
" barley	.....	200
Wheat bran	.....	200
Cotton seed meal	.....	100

(5)		
Ground oats	.....	300
" barley	.....	300
Cotton seed meal	.....	100

(2)		
Ground oats	.....	200
" barley	.....	200
Wheat bran	.....	100
Linseed meal	.....	100

(4)		
Ground oats	.....	100
" barley	.....	100
Wheat middlings	.....	200
" bran	.....	200
Gluten meal	.....	100

(6)		
Ground barley	.....	400
Wheat bran	.....	200
Cotton seed meal	.....	100

When You Have No Legume Hay

When the roughage contains no legume hay, but is all low in protein, such as wild or timothy hay and fodder, with or without silage, use the following mixtures:

(1)		
Ground oats	.....	100
" barley	.....	100
Wheat bran	.....	100
Linseed meal	.....	100

(3)		
Ground oats	.....	200
Wheat middlings	.....	300
" bran	.....	200
Cotton seed meal	.....	200

(2)		
Ground oats	.....	200
" barley	.....	200
" rye	.....	200
Cotton seed meal	.....	200

(4)		
Ground oats	.....	200
" barley	.....	100
Wheat middlings	.....	100
Gluten meal	.....	100

(5)	
Ground oats	100
" barley	100
" wheat	100
Linseed meal	100

(6)	
Ground rye	100
Wheat middlings	200
" bran	300
Linseed meal	200

When Roughage Is Very Poor

When the roughage is very poor, such as straw and corn stover and low-land hay, without silage. Feed daily five pounds of oats, barley or middlings to make up the lack in the roughage. Then feed one of the following as a grain ration:

(1)	
Ground oats	100
" barley	100
Wheat bran	100
Linseed meal	100

(2)	
Ground oats	100
Wheat middlings	100
" bran	100
Linseed meal	100

(3)	
Ground barley	200
Wheat bran	200
Cotton seed meal	100

(4)	
Ground wheat	100
" barley	100
Wheat bran	200
Gluten meal	100

Standard for Feeding Grain

Grain mixtures should be fed at the rate of one pound of grain to each $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of milk, depending upon the test of the cow. A much more accurate guide is 7 or 8 pounds of grain to each pound of fat produced. Your own feed supply may force some changes in these rations. In general, farm grains are interchangeable. Wheat is fully as good as corn or barley. Rye is as good, but must be used in smaller quantities. Where grain must be purchased the wheat mill feeds will often be lower in price and should be used.

Linseed meal, cotton seed meal and gluten meal are worth about the same. Use the one that is cheapest on your market. Commercial feeds may be used when the price makes it possible. (See Bulletin 218 for a complete discussion on feeds.)

Don't waste feed on the poor cows. Keep individual cow records through a Dairy Herd Improvement Association or through the new Minnesota Statewide C.T.A. Only good cows well fed can pay a good price for your feed. See your county agent or write the Agricultural Extension Service, University Farm, St. Paul.